

ARTICLE ALERT

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October 2009

DEMOCRACY & GLOBAL ISSUES

1. Bowden, Mark **THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY** (Atlantic Monthly, October 2009)

Unbiased journalism is being replaced by the work of "political hit men," Bowden says, citing the televised treatment of Judge Sonia Sotomayor after she was nominated by Obama for the U.S. Supreme Court. The information on Sotomayor -- specifically the "make policy" and "Latina woman" comments -- wasn't uncovered by journalists, but simply reprocessed by television news rooms from conservative web sites. The conservative Judicial Confirmation Network had gathered an "attack dossier" on each of the prospective Supreme Court nominees and had fed them all to the networks in advance, Bowden says. He decries the demise of the disinterested newspaper reporter: "What gave newspapers their value was the mission and promise of journalism -- the hope that someone was getting paid to wade into the daily tide of manure, sort through its deliberate lies and cunning half-truths, and tell a story straight." Currently available online at

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200910/media>

2. Brainard, Curtis; Russell, Cristine **THE NEW ENERGY BEAT** (Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2009)

Climate change and energy issue reporting behooves journalists to collaborate within the newsroom and with news outlets to deepen expertise and resources to better explain these critical, complex topics. Varied regional concerns and new technologies increase the need for a broad knowledge base that allows for delving beyond the pronouncements of politicians or industry lobbyists. Covering energy well means giving a comprehensive "big picture" that can both inform and influence the public and policy makers. Available online at

http://www.cjr.org/feature/the_new_energy_beat.php

3. Crossette, Barbara **FACTORING PEOPLE INTO CLIMATE CHANGE** (The Nation, September 14, 2009)

When the climate-change summit of world leaders convenes on September 22, it is very likely that the subject of women will not come up, notes the author. Although many governments pay lip service to population growth, few make the link between population and the environment. The subject of family planning is also taboo in many circles; one participant country in the climate talks has already sounded a warning to keep population off the table. The U.N. and many global NGOs and activists agree on the necessity to accept that population and climate change need to be part of an integrated policy, although making inroads into political thinking is a slow process. The author notes that U.S. officials can go to the talks, knowing that American public opinion overwhelmingly supports family planning programs worldwide, despite the attempts of some American politicians to polarize the issue. Available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090928/crossette>

4. Crossette, Barbara **US-UN TIES STILL STRAINED** (The Nation, October 2, 2009)

The Obama administration's efforts to mend ties with the United Nations suffered with the UN's firing of Peter Galbraith, the American diplomat appointed deputy special UN envoy to Afghanistan in March. The UN said he was fired "in the best interests" of the Afghan mission, but Galbraith had been berating Afghan and UN officials over what he saw as an inadequate response to the messy and fraud-plagued August 20 elections. He told BBC his being sacked "sends a terrible signal when the UN removes an official because he was concerned about fraud in an UN-sponsored and funded election." Currently available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20091019/crossette>

5. Cunningham, Brent **TAKE A STAND: HOW JOURNALISM CAN REGAIN ITS RELEVANCE** (Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2009)

Journalism in America has been damaged by its abdication of an adversarial role in public discourse. Instead, it "mostly amplifies the agendas of others—the prominent and powerful," maintains the author. He examines the changing dynamic of the news media and questions whether it has the ability to moderate public conversation and introduce new angles and ideas on national issues. Calling press objectivity "a trap" that lessens journalism's beneficial impact, he says the press needs to be on the side of the people and become a platform for establishing a public agenda. Available online at http://www.cjr.org/feature/take_a_stand.php

6. Greenwald, Bruce; Knee, Jonathan; Seave, Ava **THE MOGULS' NEW CLOTHES** (Atlantic, October 2009)

Even before the Internet upended their industry, big media companies were turning in poor performances and disappointing their shareholders. The four tenets of media industry wisdom -- growth, globalization, content and convergence -- are myths, these authors insist. Growth has actually resulted in lower stock performance, and globalization doesn't necessarily lead to higher profits. Creating superior content makes more money for the artists than for the media companies hosting their work. And finally, increased competition from multiple media sources and the Internet undercut the advantage traditional big media companies had of economies of scale and captive customers. The only real avenue to salvation that the traditional media industry has open is unglamorous: improving the efficiency of their operations. Currently available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200910/moguls>

7. Kavulla, Travis **AIDS RELIEF AND MORAL MYOPIA** (New Atlantis, No. 24, Spring 2009)

The author, a Phillips Foundation journalism fellow and former Gates Scholar in African history at Cambridge, writes that Western aid organizations, which have pursued a mechanical approach to AIDS relief in Africa, emphasizing condom use and antiretroviral drugs, have had only mixed results in reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS. What Western groups ignore, says Kavulla, is the social dimension, that Africans are "wont to view this disease ... as a moral calamity." He notes that belief in the supernatural, that spiritual forces can be summoned to cause harm or bring good, is still very much alive in African life; these old beliefs have found form in evangelical Christianity, in particular Pentecostalism, which has been spreading rapidly throughout sub-Saharan Africa for years. Any successful effort to combat AIDS, writes Kavulla, will have to enlist the authority of the evangelical preachers and their large congregations. He notes that there is a precedent for such an effort -- in the 1930s, a religious fervor known as the Holy Spirit Movement sprung up in East and Central Africa, in response to a syphilis epidemic resulting from social upheaval in the early years of colonialism. The movement railed against sex outside the bounds of marriage, linking moral concerns to social concerns to great effect. Such a change is possible again, notes Kavulla, but the Western donor community "must stop imposing its own agenda on Africa ... the sooner [it] reorients its policies to fit African realities, the better." Currently available online at <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/aids-relief-and-moral-myopia>

8. Kristof, Nicholas; WuDunn, Sheryl **THE WOMEN'S CRUSADE** (New York Times Magazine, August 23, 2009, pp. 28-39)

In many parts of the world, women are routinely beaten, raped or sold into prostitution; they are denied access to medical care and education, and have little or no economic and political power. Changing that could change everything, write the authors, saying that "the oppression of women worldwide is the human rights cause of our time." Their liberation could help solve many of the world's problems, from poverty to child mortality to terrorism. The United Nations has estimated that there are five thousand honor killings a year, the majority in the Muslim world, while one percent of the world's landowners are women. Still, they note that things are changing; educating girls and empowering women can help fight power and extremism. For example, in Egypt, 98% of people say they believe that "girls have the same right to education as boys." This is one of a series of articles in a special issue of the magazine entitled Saving The World's Women. Currently available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/magazine/23Women-t.html#>

9. Peck, Morgan E. **BUZZ OFF** (Discover, vol. 30, no. 9, October 2009, pp. 38-41)

The possible stresses causing honeybee die-off, known as Colony Collapse Disorder, include pesticides, bacterial or viral infections and mite infestations. But recently scientists have focused on industrial agricultural practices that isolate bees from their natural habitat, forcing them to live crowded together in unhealthy boxes where bees are given monotonous diets that deprive them of essential nutrients available in the wild. Bees are transported thousands of miles to pollinate similar kinds of crops and fed corn syrup in slack periods. Inbreeding also takes its toll. Some entomologists are establishing new hives with wild queens, settling them with beekeepers who allow bees to live naturally. Currently available online at <http://discover.coverleaf.com/discovermagazine/200910?pg=41#pg41>

10. Rieder, Rem **DAYDREAM BELIEVERS** (American Journalism Review, August/September 2009)

"America has become a country filled with people who stubbornly continue to believe what they want to believe, regardless of the facts," says Rieder, using as examples the persistence of people who refuse to believe Obama was born in the United States and those who believe that there are in fact provisions for "death panels" in health-care reform proposals. This situation makes it all the more critical for journalists to go beyond the "he-said, she-said" reporting of the past and not hesitate to reach firmly expressed conclusions -- with fairness, of course. Mainstream journalism has

long been uncomfortable about making and expressing conclusions, but according to Rieder, "as long as that conclusion is based on carefully reported evidence, not ideology, there's no good reason not to do it." Currently available online at <http://ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4817>

11. Smith, Julian **A HUMAN RIGHTS BREAKTHROUGH IN GUATEMALA**
(Smithsonian, October 2009)

A chance discovery of some 80 million pages of police documents in Guatemala City may reveal the fate of an estimated 200,000 people who disappeared in that country's civil war, which lasted from 1960 to 1996. Helping sort through the paper evidence is Biotech, a California-based nonprofit organization, which has developed database software and statistical analysis techniques that have assisted human rights activists from Sierra Leone to Sri Lanka. Working with an annual budget of \$2 million donated by European countries, researchers and technicians have digitized the documents that have been found in Guatemala. The evidence collected so far implicates Guatemala's National Police force in disappearances and assassinations. But uncovering such evidence remains dangerous. In March, Sergio Morales, the Guatemalan government's human rights ombudsman, released the first official report on the police archives project; shortly after, his wife was kidnapped and tortured. The question about what to do with future findings remains open, but work at the archive is expected to continue. The databases have been made available to Guatemalan citizens and human rights groups everywhere. Currently available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Digs-Paper-Trail.html>

ECONOMIC SECURITY

12. **EUREKA MOMENTS: HOW A LUXURY ITEM BECAME A TOOL OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT** (Economist, September 24, 2009)

Mobile phones, now affordable to the vast majority of people around the world, have become the single most transformative tool for development, according to Jeffrey Sachs of the Columbia University's Earth Institute. In Africa, "mobile money" now means financial transactions can be carried out easily even in remote areas. Mobile phones play a huge role in micro businesses, which make up 50 to 60 percent of business globally, and as much as 90 percent in Africa. Small businesses can more efficiently negotiate with suppliers and reduce the overhead of running their small enterprises. There is also some evidence that mobile phones can be used to root out corruption; the article cites the example of an official in Pakistan

overseeing land transfers, who randomly called the mobile numbers of buyers and sellers to find out if they had been asked to pay bribes. Currently available online at

http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14483872

13. Grant, Greg **THE NEW THREAT TO OIL SUPPLIES: HACKERS** (Foreign Policy, August 25, 2009)

Offshore drilling rigs are becoming increasingly computerized and remote-controlled, a trend that renders them vulnerable to sabotage, as proved by a recent case in California, involving a disgruntled contractor who hacked into the shore-to-rig communications system. Most new oil discoveries are in deep ocean waters, a very dangerous environment for "roughnecks", and the expense of living quarters, feeding and evacuation has become prohibitively high, hence the move to remote-controlled rigs. While the rigs employ state-of-the-art robotics, the computer software controlling the rig is often decades old, notes the author. He notes that the possibility of cyberattack will only grow, as governments and companies around the world vie for ever-more scarce global oil reserves. Currently available online at

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/25/the_new_threat_to_oil_supplies_hackers

14. Kornell, Sam **BIG STEP FORWARD LOST IN SHUFFLE** (Miller-McCune, September 16, 2009)

The author notes that a "momentous bit of news slipped by more or less unnoticed, lost in the general hullabaloo over health care and the apparent deterioration of civil discourse sweeping the country" -- the unveiling of the Obama administration's plan to compel the U.S. automakers to increase the fuel-efficiency of new vehicles to over 35 miles per gallon by the year 2016. The plan, which would be enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency, would raise the efficiency standards by 5 percent a year. In view of the new evidence coming to light about climate change and looming future declines in global oil production, the author notes that "any serious national effort to increase fuel efficiency is a welcome development", and that the new emissions standards, which will probably go into effect next year, "represent the most impressive step to reduce fossil fuel emissions in the history of American politics." Currently available online at <http://www.miller-mccune.com/news/big-step-forward-lost-in-shuffle-1476>

15. Mullen, Michael G. **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: GETTING BACK TO BASICS** (Joint Force Quarterly, no. 55, Fourth Quarter 2009, pp. 2-4)

Adm. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, writes that in the world of communication, "the lines between strategic, operational, and tactical are blurred beyond distinction . . . we have walked away from the original intent." He notes that our biggest problem is credibility, because the U.S. has not invested the time and resources to build trust or deliver on promises. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have become effective at governance, and in doing so, they erode the legitimacy of the Afghan government. He says that strategic communication problems are really "policy and execution problems -- Each time we fail to live up to our values or don't follow up on a promise, we look more and more like the arrogant Americans the enemy claims we are." The irony, says Mullen, is that we know better, and have only to look at our past -- the post-World War II Marshall Plan did not need a "strat comm" plan or public opinion poll to rebuild Europe. Mullen is an avowed fan of Greg Mortenson, the author of Three Cups of Tea, who has built schools for girls in the Panjshir Valley of Pakistan. Mullen writes that we "must also be better listeners -- the Muslim community is a world we don't fully -- and don't always attempt to -- understand." Available online at

http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i55/1.pdf

16. Pollack, Kenneth M. **THE BATTLE FOR BAGHDAD** (National Interest, no. 103, September/October 2009, pp. 8-17)

The author, director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, notes that Iraqi Prime Minister el-Maliki has been deploying more of Iraq's nascent military power to the north and goading the army into regular provocations with the Kurdish militia. While el-Maliki has a legitimate reason for the Iraqi government to control all of Iraq's territory, Pollack argues that this is not the time to resolve this issue -- more than one Iraqi-Kurdish confrontation nearly erupted into violence, and only the timely intervention of American units prevented bloodshed. Against this backdrop, the U.S. is increasingly becoming an impediment for el-Maliki; this not only complicates his election strategy, but is an affront to his own desire to see the Iraqi government regain control of the entire country. The reemergence of Iraqi nationalism has created two challenges for the U.S. -- it produces new risks for violence that American forces need to prevent, and it has led many Iraqi politicians to take public positions unsupportive of the American presence, even though most know that America's role as peacekeeper and mediator remains critical to Iraq's stability and progress. Currently available online at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=22018>

17. Slawter, Bruce **PAY TO PLAY** (American Interest, September-October 2009)

The U.S. commercial nuclear power industry has languished for years, notes the author, a result of huge cost overruns on plants built in the 1970s and 1980s, and of notable accidents such as those at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. The decline of expertise and research in the U.S. nuclear power industry is now translating into erosion of our ability to influence nonproliferation internationally, notes Slawter, as other countries, notably France, Japan, Russia and now China surpass the U.S. in certain areas of reactor development. Slawter notes that what is emerging is a "pay-to-play" arrangement -- in order to be recognized as a nuclear authority, countries have to invest in their own nuclear technology. He notes that President Obama has become increasingly pragmatic with respect to nuclear power, which will put him at odds with many of his Democratic supporters. In order to maintain the U.S. lead in safety and nonproliferation, Slawter writes that the Obama administration should redouble its efforts in conjunction with France and Japan to develop new-generation reactors, conduct further research into closing the nuclear fuel cycle, and strengthen existing international frameworks, and provide a global fuel repository, so that countries aspiring to nuclear energy do not develop a nuclear fuel cycle on their own. Available online at <http://the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=660>

18. Yunus, Muhammad **ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS** (World Policy Journal, vol. 26, no. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 5-12)

Yunus, founder of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, notes that the optimism about global prosperity that prevailed at the beginning of the millennium has been soured by the financial collapse that began in 2008. He predicts that we are in the beginning stages of a long and painful period, in which the combined effects of the intertwined financial, food, energy and environmental crises will have a disproportionate effect on the world's poorest people. Capitalism is in crisis, says Yunus, because the basic purpose of the financial system and credit markets have been fundamentally distorted by the obsession with paper profits instead of serving human needs. He argues that capitalism is a "half-built structure" -- most efforts have been focused on the profit-making framework of the free-market system that was conceived by Adam Smith 250 years ago, yet we have paid little attention to Smith's equally-important writings on the moral dimension. Yunus believes that the current economic crisis offers an unparalleled opportunity to reintroduce the disregarded aspects of Adam Smith's message by developing what Yunus calls "social businesses", whose primary function is not to make profits, but to promote the public welfare. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/wopj/26/2>

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

19. Trenin, Dmitri **NATO AND RUSSIA: PARTNERSHIP OR PERIL?** (Current History, vol. 108, no. 720, October 2009, pp. 299-303)

Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, notes that, twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the major piece of unfinished post-Cold War business is Russia's absence from a European security framework. This affects not just Russia, but its neighbors, such as Ukraine and Georgia, as seen by the August 2008 conflict in the Caucasus. Trenin says it is unlikely that Russia will join the U.S.-led NATO alliance in the foreseeable future, so the only option is to pursue the long and difficult path toward a security community that would include NATO members and non-members. He emphasizes that "it is important that the Russians do not feel that a common front of Western allies is ganging up on them," and making them feel that they are "equals among equals" would do a lot to promote security in Europe. Trenin notes that the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), founded in 2002, has been underused as a vehicle for Western-Russian security interaction; he advocates expanding the NRC's agenda, turning it into an "all-weather operation" to handle the inevitable disagreements. An expanded NRC mandate could prove beneficial in missile defense, conventional arms control and anti-drug cooperation in Afghanistan. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.currenthistory.com/>

20. Van Niekerk, Phillip **AFRICA'S LEADERSHIP VACUUM** (Current History, vol. 108, no. 718, May 2009, pp. 232-234)

The author, managing director of the Good Governance Group, notes that the departure from office of South Africa President Thabo Mbeki and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is a "step backward" from establishing a new group of leaders in Africa who can tackle corruption and conflict and promote democracy and development. This vacuum is putting at risk many of the gains Africa has made over the past decade, says the author, noting that several coups in recent months have met with tepid response. Van Niekerk notes that the only real contender for pan-African leadership is Libya's Moammar Qaddafi, who has enormous clout, but is widely seen as an eccentric with a dubious agenda, such as his far-fetched proposal for a United States of Africa. Incoming South African President Jacob Zuma may be able to make more progress in Zimbabwe than his predecessor, says the author, noting that Zuma greatly dislikes the excesses of the Mugabe regime. Although the situation may appear gloomy, says Van Niekerk, there is some cause for optimism, noting that there are new leaders emerging, though usually one or two removes from power. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.currenthistory.com/>

U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

21. Heinberg, Richard **OUR EVANESCENT CULTURE AND THE AWESOME DUTY OF LIBRARIANS** (Energy Bulletin, October 7, 2009)

How secure is our civilization's accumulated knowledge? Educator and author Heinberg notes that earlier civilizations over the millennia have disappeared, having given insufficient thought to how their societies' achievements would be preserved. Although the sheer volume of modern cultural materials is unprecedented, in many ways our modern heritage is uniquely vulnerable, and large swaths of it are at risk of being swept away at astonishing speed. The problem, notes Heinberg, is digitization -- not just that storage formats become obsolete, but that the entire cultural enterprise depends on electricity: "digitization represents a huge bet on society's ability to keep the lights on forever." The real threats to modern information are systemic vulnerabilities, such as aging infrastructure and declining supplies of fossil fuels to power the electric grid. He says that the message is clear: don't let books die, and promote skills-based education to keep the practical and performing arts alive. Available online at <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/50315>

22. Hirschfeld, Neil **TEACHING COPS TO SEE** (Smithsonian, vol. 40, no. 7, October 2009)

When police officers investigate a crime scene or are on call, paying attention to detail and communicating accurately are critical. This article profiles Amy Herman, a New York art historian and lawyer who, after a harrowing experience on a police patrol while a law student, began teaching a course called "The Art of Perception" for police, designed to fine-tune their attention to visual details, using paintings from New York's Metropolitan Museum. The focus is not on the artist, title of the work or technique, but on describing what they see in the picture. Herman has conducted the course for several federal-government agencies, as well as the Scotland Yard in London. The author notes that their newly-attuned skills of observation have paid off in at least one high-profile case. Available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Teaching-Cops-to-See.html?c=y&page=1>

23. Moyer, Steve **WHAT IF?** (Humanities, vol. 30, no. 4, July/August 2009, pp. 32-36)

The author believes that it is difficult to take in all the ways that reading is changing in response to new technology. Bob Stein, co-director and founder of the Institute for the Future of the Book, is exploring how the digital revolution is transforming the way we

read. One of Stein's recent projects was a kind of online book club in which seven women engaged in a close reading of Doris Lessing's *THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK*, then commented online in the margins of the electronic book, by means of an open-source software called CommentPress. Moyer explores the changes in the book in the past thirty years, noting that there have been more advances in the evolution of the book than there had been in the past five centuries. Currently available online at <http://neh.gov/news/humanities/2009-07/WhatIf.html>

24. Van Gelder, Sarah **PARKER PALMER: KNOW YOURSELF, CHANGE YOUR WORLD** (Yes! Magazine, Fall 2009)

In this interview, educator and author Parker Palmer notes that most of us lack an understanding of our inner lives; reflection, which should be the fourth "R" of education, is not taught in schools. Parker says that "every line of work is deepened by bringing all of our human capacities to bear on whatever we are doing, and that includes our inner sensibilities as well as our externally oriented knowledge and skill." Schools are often not a place that promotes personal development, a chief reason why fifty percent of teachers are gone within five years, due to burnout. Parker notes that people who become aware of their inner life also become aware of the disparity between their integrity and the manner in which institutions around them operate. He cites Wall Street and the financial crisis as a prime example of an environment in which few insiders were brave enough to speak out about what was happening. While the courage of individual whistle-blowers is important, real institutional change happens when groups of like-minded people come together and lend each other support. Institutions can seem like an unassailable colossus, says Parker, but "we can call them back to some semblance of humanity by reinventing them, because we invented them in the first place." Currently available online at <http://cms.yesmagazine.org/issues/learn-as-you-go/know-yourself-change-your-world/>

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